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ABSTRACT

The teaching-learning process for counselors-in-training can be maximized through the use of multifaceted assessments. Extensive research shows the efficacy of involving students in making decisions about their own learning and assessment. The Jacksonville State University counselor education program is used to exemplify how assessment results can become invaluable tools in the teaching-learning process. Their counselor education program is geared to specific learning outcomes and the assessment instruments and procedures used are matched to the types of learning outcomes being evaluated. This document highlights how the multifaceted approach can become a valuable tool that enhances all aspects of the teaching-learning process. Student involvement in all phases of counselor training is recommended. It enables them to demonstrate their critical thinking, their powers of persuasion, and their creativity. Active involvement in the assessment processes fosters students' confidence in their ability to become effective practicing counselors. Appendix One is a description of the Challenge Method. (Contains 16 references.) (JIM)

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Chapter Six

The Pedagogical Basis for Multifaceted Assessment in Counselor Education

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Abstract

The teaching-learning process for counselors-in-training can be maximized through the use of multifaceted assessment. Extensive research shows the efficacy of involving students in making decisions about their own learning and assessment. The Jacksonville State University counselor-education program is used to exemplify how assessment results can become invaluable tools in the teaching-learning process.

The efficacy of using multifaceted assessment in education, rather than relying on a single measure for evaluating command of content domain and performance competencies, is virtually unchallenged today. Research substantiating this approach has dealt largely with issues related to validity and test bias. This paper examines another perspective, that of maximizing feedback from various forms of assessment in order to enhance the teaching-learning process in the training of new counselors. Such a review is timely, given the concerns raised in recent issues of *Counselor Education and Supervision* concerning the pedagogical foundation of counseling ("Restructuring," 2000; Sexton, 1998).

Student involvement and ownership are crucial in all aspects of effective education. This learning principle has been recognized (but not always practiced) since the beginning of the twentieth century when the Progressive Movement challenged the traditional, passive approach to education in which teachers lectured and students memorized content and recited by rote. John Dewey, who was perhaps the most articulate spokesperson for the movement, emphasized that students must be actively involved in their own education and that learning would be

greatly enhanced by social interactions and a variety of experiences (Dewey, 1938). Scores of eminent theorists and researchers (Piaget, Vygotsky, Ausubel, Bloom, Bruner, and others) have substantiated the efficacy of active involvement on the part of the student. Their work on cognition initiated the Constructivist Movement in education, the theory that significant learning occurs only when the student finds the subject matter meaningful and the teaching-learning process is interactive and experiential.

Jerome Bruner, arguably the most influential contemporary learning theorist, made significant contributions in this regard. He proposed a discovery model of instruction that gave students the responsibility for choosing not only what they would learn, but how they would learn it. He added to our understanding of how meaningful curricula can be planned and assessment employed to enhance the learning process (Bruner, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1971). He described a spiral curriculum in which students would be introduced to concepts at an elementary level and later reintroduced to the concepts in various representations at progressively more complex and advanced levels. Right from the beginning, students would practice inquiry, self-monitoring, and self-correction, eventually evolving into self-motivated, autonomous learners. Bruner also demonstrated how assessment itself could become part of the instructional process. He described errors as hypotheses; i.e., responses that could be tested. Using Bruner's approach in the classroom gave students the opportunity to be active participants in both the learning and the evaluative phases of their education.

Another contemporary theorist, Howard Gardner, has added considerable impetus to the concept of student involvement in the teaching-learning process and to the important relationship between instruction and assessment (Gardner, 1983, 1991). Proponents of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences recognize eight avenues by which students may solve a problem. Multiple ways of knowing require multiple ways of assessing that knowing. When assessment is directly linked to learning, it becomes a vital part of that learning. This link necessitates that students will assume some control over the evaluation procedures used to assess their skills, knowledge, and competencies. When students participate to this extent in the teaching-learning process, issues are probed more deeply, additional possibilities are explored, and significant responses emerge (Weber, 1999).

Students who are in the clinical sequence of their training need to feel a sense of empowerment in order to move toward professional autonomy (Nelson, 1997). Although becoming empowered may be a challenge for some students, particularly women, it is crucial that during their field experiences students assume a degree of authority within

the supervisory relationship. Actively participating in the teaching-learning process through exercising a considerable degree of control over the assessment outcomes used to evaluate their knowledge and their performance paves the way for this empowerment to emerge and develop in students.

A cornerstone of training in counselor education is the full involvement of practicum and internship students in practicing the entire range of counselor roles and responsibilities and getting constructive feedback (Boylan, Malley, & Scott, 1995). Self-monitoring and self-correction are also critical. Students pull from their classroom experiences, as well as their life experiences, in order to participate fully in the supervised clinical experience. If those experiences have included collaboration, negotiation, and goal setting in the context of fulfilling a variety of assessment requirements, students are well on their way toward professional autonomy. All trainees, whatever their level, have reported being more satisfied with the supervisory relationship when they have had an active role in formulating their own goals (Nelson, 1997).

Instruction in the Jacksonville State University counselor-education program is geared to specified learning outcomes. The assessment instruments and procedures used are likewise matched to the types of learning outcomes being evaluated. Whatever the mode of instruction or type of assessment, student involvement and interaction are elicited. Applicable guidelines in the American Counseling Association *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (1995) and the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) are followed to insure that best practices are modeled. The general types of assessments used and the areas assessed are as follows:

1. Tests (objective and essay) are used to assess command of the knowledge base. To accompany forced-choice, paper-and-pencil test formats such as multiple-choice tests, we recommend an auxiliary assessment strategy termed "the Challenge" (Yunker, 1999). This posttest strategy provides a structured format for applying Bruner's theory that students' errors be treated as hypotheses to be tested (see the appendix).
2. Papers (research studies, literature reviews, critiques, etc.) are assigned to assess students' abilities to analyze, synthesize and organize information, and collect data, and to refine both research skills and writing mechanics.
3. Performance tasks accompanied by ratings and critiques (formal and informal classroom presentations, group projects, clinical skill demonstrations such as role-plays, audio and video tapes,

etc.) are used to assess communication and develop clinical skills.

4. Mini-portfolios (compiled during the counseling practicum and internship) assess and document a range of attributes and competencies expected of the emerging professional counselor. The mini-portfolios required in our counselor-education program include both core and student-selected products. Examples include audio and video tapes, group session plans, summaries or scripts of individual sessions, group participant evaluations, self-critiques, university and site supervisor critiques, and evaluations completed by all constituents.

We emphatically recommend student involvement in all phases of counselor training, including assessment. In order to make a determination concerning the current level of individualization in teaching and degree of student input, trainers could ask themselves the following questions:

- Do I employ multiple assessment techniques in each course I teach?
- Do I employ multiple assessment techniques in the clinical experiences I supervise?
- Is there compatibility between my instructional objectives and respective assessments?
- How do I use assessment results to provide feedback, instruction, and remediation?
- Is there more I could do to involve students in their own learning?
- How comfortable am I with students assuming more responsibility for their assessments and their subsequent empowerment as counselors?

It has become standard practice to use multifaceted assessment in counselor-education programs. In fact, the efficacy of this approach is supported in all types of educational evaluation that address validity and fairness issues. We hope we have highlighted another advantage of the multifaceted approach, one which may be underemphasized in the training of new counselors, namely how a variety of assessment results can become invaluable tools that enhance all aspects of the teaching-learning process.

In counselor-education programs, as in other educational programs, instruction is delivered and students are evaluated. There are several purposes for using a variety of assessments to evaluate students. According to Gronlund (1985), the purposes of assessment include (a) designing instructional objectives that reflect desired learning outcomes; (b) determining learners' needs; (c) providing relevant instruction based on assessment feedback; (d) evaluating

intended outcomes; and (e) employing evaluation results to plan and improve educational programming. Our assessment techniques are formative and summative, assessing both the processes and products of learning. Formative evaluations—such as in-class activities, critical discussions, and role-plays—are employed to monitor student progress and provide continuous feedback (but not grades). Summative evaluations—in the form of tests, papers, presentations, and portfolios—assess the refined products of the teaching-learning process. Practicums and internships provide elements of both. Using such a multifaceted approach to assessment permits counselors-in-training to evaluate their learning of theoretical concepts, and it enables them to demonstrate their critical thinking, their powers of persuasion, and their creativity. Active involvement in the assessment processes fosters students' confidence in their ability to become effective practicing counselors.

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conferences and has extensive experience as a consultant and supervising LPC.

Appendix

The Challenge is a highly structured discussion between students and a resident expert (the instructor) following the return of graded test papers that encourages students to question the answer key to some multiple-choice test items. When test items are constructed beyond the knowledge level of Bloom's cognitive domain (i.e., comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis), there may be room for a logical defense in support of another answer choice. It is our contention that students who are able to provide an objective and rational justification for an answer choice that differs from the keyed target should get credit for that answer. This strategy turns the written portion of the test into an instructional tool and reinforces retention of useful information. A synopsis of the Challenge method follows:

1. Choose or develop multiple-choice test items to reflect the course objectives at all levels in the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy.
2. When introducing the test, instruct students to choose what they perceive to be the best answer to each item.
3. Administer and score the test according to the answer key.
4. Return graded papers or test booklets to students and set aside about an hour (depending on the length of the test) for the Challenge activity.
5. Read each test item with its keyed answer aloud to the class. Instruct them to identify those items they might want to question when you are finished.
6. Spell out the rules for the activity and enforce them strictly.
   - Students must raise a hand and wait to be recognized before initiating a challenge. This rule teaches patience and self-control.
   - Students must phrase the challenge with "I" statements not "you" statements. For example, students could say "I interpreted number __ to mean __, so I chose __ as the best answer"; or, "For number __ , I chose __ because __."
   - Students must defend and justify their answer choices rationally. This rule encourages articulate communication and accountability.
   - Students must be objective. No whining or hostility is tolerated. Students learn to disagree in a constructive,

nonviolent way.

- Peers are encouraged to provide support for the challenge or for the key. No put-downs are allowed. This practice encourages cooperation and reinforces retention of the pertinent information.
- As the instructor, you reserve the right to accept or reject a challenge without argument from the students.

7. Indicate how students should mark successfully challenged test items to receive credit.
8. Require that students return all test papers and answer sheets to you. Students who keep a test paper automatically receive a grade of F.
8. If you accept a challenge, all students who chose the same tag *and* were present for the Challenge activity also receive credit. Absentees are not eligible for credit for successfully challenged test items. This creates motivation to participate.